and highland meadows. Water is abundant and swift perennial streams from icy springs cut the landscape. Many of the mountains are capped with snow throughout the year, and the plains around Sulaymaniya constitute one of the most verdant areas in Iraq. The region has suffered extensive deforestation, but poplar and willow abound along the watercourses and a few stands of heavier timber, such as oak, may yet be found in the uplands. The rivers and streams offer fish, and bear, ibex, snow leopards, and wolves are still to be encountered on the mountainsides. Save at the highest elevations, the area is blasted by the sun in summer, scorching the vegetation, but to a lesser extent than in the plains to the south. With the winter season of rain and snow, many of the passes are blocked for several months. The temperatures in either summer or winter, however, are not extreme. In spring the meadows are filled with brightly-colored flowers, particularly the poppy, but their life is short before the onset of the summer heat.

The Kurdish town of Rowanduz is to be found in the mountains fifty miles northeast of Erbil. In older days Rowanduz was directly on the trade route between Erbil and Iran, but the recent construction of an automobile highway by the British has removed it from the main stream of what remains of this traffic.[1] The exact antiquity of the town is uncertain, but it first achieved prominence as the headquarters of Kor Pasha, a chieftain who gained temporary

[1]Recounted in Hamilton, 1937.

CHAPTER III

THE MERCANTILE CENTER

The mountainous character of the Rowanduz region, its many peaks and gorges, acts to limit the amount of arable land. It would be difficult to estimate the actual extent of the land which might be brought under cultivation, but it could only be a smaller part of the entire area. Wide, level stretches of land are to be found, such as the plains about Batas or Dyana, but many other holdings are no more than strips cut into hillsides or cliffs. On the other hand, in the absence of mineral exploitation or industry, a high percentage, perhaps 80%, of the population is directly engaged in agriculture or animal husbandry, and the productive wealth of the district is almost wholly derived from these two pursuits.

Game is not abundant, and hunting and fishing cannot be said to add any important supplement to the food supply. In the town of Rowanduz itself there are four professional fishermen and a hunter, but their activities are seasonal, and they have additional employment. Ibex, the long-horned mountain goat, is hunted chiefly for sport, and strong-smelling skins and horns are exhibited as trophies by local huntsmen. In accordance with Quranic prescription, if such game is to be eaten, it must be bled while still "alive," after having been brought down with a rifle. The local

The local
mountain partridge (Kurdish, <u>shikew</u>) makes a regularly favored dish, and is clubbed or snared. Wolves are occasionally shot in winter for their pelts, and a few furs may always be seen hanging in the shops of merchants in Rowanduz. Snow leopards and bears are only rarely encountered. Numerous stories surround bears and their predilection for honey. They are thought to be in some way akin to humans, and tales of their abduction of women for mates are frequent. Fishing, carried on with nets or bombs of blasting powder, is similarly limited, and the largest catch is a type of carp.

Animal husbandry constitutes one of the most important activities of the area, because wool and skins are two of its few valuable exports. The animals so utilized are the black-haired goat and fat-tailed sheep, the latter often stained with some mark in red ochre as a "brand." From the sheep and goats wool, skins, flesh, and milk are obtained. Cattle have utility as beasts of burden, and are only rarely slaughtered for their meat. The dairy products of all these animals constitute a large part of the daily diet as milk, <u>mast</u> (artificially curdled milk, yoghurt), butter, and cheese. <u>Gi</u> or clarified butter is commonly used in cooking, in competition with industrially produced vegetable oil, and is prepared by agitating a milk-filled sheepskin suspended from a wooden tripod and allowing the butter to melt. It has been noted that the <u>kotchir</u> or nomads seem to act as shepherds for the entire area, but they do not exercise an exclusive monopoly, for almost

forbidden in the Rowanduz area and an investigation of their sources might prove embarrassing to the government itself. Most of the modern items, however, have an Iranian Army history. The adulation of weapons, common to the youth of many countries, is a prominent feature of Kurdish adolescence, and a lad who by diligence or a stroke of good fortune has obtained an elderly pistol or a rifle has a treasure indeed. The skill of the Kurds with arms is open to some question, in view of the high price of illicit ammunition, but several demonstrations were witnessed on vultures (whom it is strictly forbidden to shoot) which gave evidence of capability.

In treating the costume of the women of the town, it is important to remember that three different categories must be dealt with, the wives of the civil officials, Kurdish townswomen of the upper class, and those of humbler stations, although the difference in dress between the latter two groups is largely a matter of the quality of the material and the wearing of the veil. To describe first the garments of a Kurdish woman of the lower classes, the basic undergarment, as in the case of the men, is a pair of white cotton drawers falling below the knees, although in these the bottoms are more tightly bound about the calves. Above this a simple cotton shirt may appear. Over the drawers full trousers of dark-coloured cloth, drawn in at the ankles, may be worn, an invariable item in the attire of village women. To build up the outer garment a series of chemises and simple dresses with long,

of the bowl, two or three. One product of the area is a 276
long wooden cigarette holder, cut from the thin branch of
a cherry tree and laboriously drilled, but it has little
more than curiosity value for the local people. European [439]
cigarette lighters are in great demand, and together with [293]
the dagger and the rosary form an important part in every
adult male's ensemble. There are several varieties of
these, and are Austrian in derivation. Several craftsmen [372]
in the town use flint and steel to light their pipes, but
this is relatively rare, a survival among the poor and
thrifty. Both men and women smoke, the latter as much as
their husbands, and there is no restriction on youngsters.
Children usually avoid tobacco as a matter of physical
distaste, not because of any prohibition laid upon them.
During the fasting hours of Ramadan it is considered im- [785]
polite, if not impious, to smoke on the streets, although [576]
tobacco, of course, has no mention in the Quran.

Almost all of the houses are infested with mice, but, 136
insofar as their inroads are not too intensive, they are
not regarded as a particular nuisance. Homes of the lower
classes, as well as the khan or hotel, are infested with
vermin of various types, of which the chief scourge is the
flea. Both flies and mosquitos are troublesome in the
summer months, and some effort is expended to keep them
from infants, but the greater number of adults pay little
attention to them. Scorpions and snakes sometimes turn
up, and are killed with the greatest possible dispatch.

One curious fact gradually dawns on an American observer, 825
that almost no one is ever heard whistling, and one of 533
the reasons elicited is that it is supposed to attract
snakes. A few lizards are found in the houses and their 136
value in ridding the rooms of insects is recognized. In
winter most of the pests disappear, and their annoyance is
greatest in the warmest days of summer. A large percentage 164
of the townspeople do not consult the medical officer for 758
their ailments, and, coupled with the deficiency of infor-
mation in the hospital itself, it is thus difficult to
arrive at any exact answer to the question of health. In- 165
fant mortality appears to be high, but an individual who
passes adolescence seems to have excellent chances of
reaching old age. The number of men in the town vigorous 887
at sixty, seventy, and eighty years is surprising. Ra'uf
Effendi was considering a second marriage at sixty, to re-
place the son who had died (at the age of eleven "of the [761]
evil eye"), and Shakir Effendi led an extremely active
life at eighty-five, walking up and down the steep slope
of the town eight times each day. Dysentery troubles al- 164
most everyone, and there are a few cases of malaria every
summer. Most housewives have a series of remedies for 757
everyday complaints, but it cannot be denied that a 759
physician who commanded the respect of the townspeople
would find himself most welcome.

In concluding this section it may be observed that 177
there have been a number of changes in household life since

Kurdish music is nevertheless played on a pipe resembling the chanter of a bagpipe and has often a pleasant lilt. Kurdish dancing, however, is by no means as strenuous as Scottish. Kurds and all other mountain dwellers in Kurdistan dance what is known as the chain-dance, similar to that which is, I believe, commonly seen in the Balkans. The dancers join hands and form a ring. The piper and a drummer with a sort of tenor drum stand in the middle, and the dance consists of fairly intricate footwork while the circle moves slowly round. Often star dancers who fancy themselves as budding Nijinskys do solo dances inside the circle. Amongst the Kurds the men and women dance separately, but with the Christian sects the two sexes dance together. This does not mean, however, that Kurdish women are completely segregated or kept by themselves. As a matter of fact, they possess considerable freedom and may be seen gathering firewood, tending animals or engaged in other tasks on the mountainside, often far from their villages.

Up to five years ago the Barzan district of Kurdistan retained all of its savage and primitive features. Government had not penetrated and Shaikh Ahmed, a religious fanatic, was dictator. With the help of his brothers and a standing army of several hundred men he completely dominated the impoverished inhabitants, who had the shaikh's bodyguard perpetually billeted on them and who had to provide them with food, clothing and tobacco and anything else they might fancy. Any protests on the part of the villagers were discouraged by the strongest methods. Such complete ascendancy did Shaikh Ahmed gain over his savage and illiterate people that they began to look upon him as a god and, though Muslims in name, turned their faces towards him in prayer rather than towards Mecca, as tradition demands. There was a Mullah in the district called Mullah Juj, who represented himself to be the prophet of this new god. The Mullah was a very fiery and eloquent speaker and, unfortunately for himself, his fame began to surpass even that of the deity. This could not of course be tolerated, and one of Shaikh Ahmed's brothers "bumped off" the presumptuous prophet. Up to that time the Koran had been revered, but now the Shaikh issued orders for the destruction of all copies to be found. He also withdrew the ban on the eating of pork, for wild pig were plentiful in Barzan. Armed missionaries were sent out beyond the Barzan bounds, and villages which refused to accept the Shaikh were burned and a number of the male inhabitants put to death. This state of affairs could not be allowed to continue, and the 'Iraq Government was forced to take action in conjunction with the British Royal Air Force.